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CHRISTIAN COURIER
A Reformed Weekly

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To market, to market to find ... problems

JESSIE SCHUT

Earthkeeping's executive director Kathryn Olson (r.) explains where long-stemmed carnations come from.

Jessie Schut

EDMONTON — Grocery shopping has never been so easy. With supermarkets open 24 hours a day, more products than Granny ever dreamed of, no shortage of the essentials, and your choice of paying with cash, credit or debit card, the weekly stroll down the aisles ought to be a piece of cake.

Not after you've taken a "Supermarket Tour" with Earthkeeping's executive director Kathryn Olson, however. Sure, you've always avoided those favorite convenience items like super-processed cereals and heavily packaged snack foods. But now you find yourself looking askance at the apples and potatoes, and you're thinking of alternatives to the carnations you like to treat yourself to once in a while. You wonder if you ought to get up early on Saturday morning instead of sleeping in, so you can buy your cabbages and pork chops at the farmer's market.

Ignorance is bliss; and it's easier, too. But the Supermarket Tour aims to remove some of that ignorance.

Haunting words

As I walked the aisles of our local Safeway with Olson and a few other brave souls, Cal De Witt's words at the recent Earthkeeping conference rang in my mind: "We can't save the earth, but we must not be counted among the destroyers. If we are ignorant destroyers, we are still destroyers, even cultured destroyers...."

And many of the products in our local supermarkets are contributing to the degradation of creation.

Immediately after we walked in the front door, the store's floral shop attracted us. Olson stopped at buckets of lovely, long-stemmed carnations and began telling us where they may have come from: a valley close to Bogota, Colombia.

That valley had once been a rich agricultural resource for the local people, producing food for their families. Now, with the country in debt to the rest of the world, the valley was covered over with greenhouses, where these flowers were raised as a revenue-producing export crop. The long straight stems required extensive manual labor and high doses of pesticides to control insects. The workers, mostly low-paid women, were at risk. A little bit of God's creation is destroyed, but the carnations were cheap: two for 79 cents.

But lest you opt for roses, Olson had another tale to tell. Local rose growers had been supplying the market, but they couldn't compete with the low-priced imported products from Mexico and South America. The locals were no longer in business.

Produce must be okay

We moved on to the produce section. Safeway was sure to pick up some brownie points here, I thought, since Alberta produces great root crops and winter vegetables. And being close to B.C., surely Alberta would get most of the fruits from the Okanagan Valley.

Wrong again. Of the four or five varieties of potatoes on display, only one was labelled as Alberta grown. Apples and oranges came from California or Washington, a few lonely pears from B.C., and kiwi fruit from New Zealand.

We rejoiced when we finally discovered some squashes grown in Brooks, and alfalfa sprouts from Camrose. Consider all the fuel spent trucking produce thousands of miles (the average is 2000 miles) when there was good stuff close to home, suggested Olson. Unfortunately, consumers want to pay rock-bottom prices; if our home-grown produce costs a little more because it isn't

See **HIDDEN** *page 2...*

Victoria becomes a land of Ten Thousand Villages

JEFF HOOGENDOORN

Hugo Ciro (r.) with volunteer Ruth Dyck at his Ten Thousand Villages store in Victoria.

Jeff Hoogendoorn

VICTORIA — A small, unassuming shop in the upscale Victoria suburb of Oak Bay has become another ray of hope for artisans in Third World countries. The latest in a host of Ten Thousand Villages stores opened here last week as another outlet for crafts and other arts.

A quick glance around the tiny store reveals treasures from all over the globe. Carvings of a graceful gazelle and a lanky giraffe stand guard in one corner, hewed from Cameroon trees by their makers. Handcrafted tables and other small pieces of furniture from India and Pakistan adorn the floor. Fine linens from Thailand, and vibrant *joie de vivre* paintings of Haitian urban and rural settings entice.

Fostering self-reliance

Ten Thousand Villages, formerly known as SELFHELP run by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), had its humble beginnings back in 1946. Since then, it has

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News

Hidden costs of cheap products investigated

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mass-produced all year long in sunnier climates by migrant workers, it may not sell. And a little bit more of creation is destroyed.

Hidden costs

Olson told us to observe how much shelf space is devoted to certain products. Pop, she said, is a huge money maker because its main products are sugar and water — very cheap raw resources. But where does the sugar come from? And how do the big multinational corporations that produce the pop treat their workers in other countries? Ignorance is bliss....

JESSIE SCHUT

Kathryn Olson (l.) demystifies the shopping process.

Canadians spend only 12 per cent of their income on food and Americans only 11 per cent, compared to Europeans' 20-30 per cent and to Third World citizens who often spend 100 per cent. We think our grocery bills are high, she said, but are they? And what are the hidden costs to creation?

We were becoming pretty savvy observers as we spotted tins of mushrooms from Thailand and sausages from Germany, for instance. And eggs packed in Styrofoam, which nobody reuses. Aisles of non-food products that bring in bigger profits for the store. Items like snack foods on the ends of aisles to entice impulse buyers. Even the music was suspect, as we learned that the stores often play sappy, sweet music at supper time when tired women are shopping for their families, while they'll play snappy, quick tunes close to closing time so the customers will move a little faster.

Protests work

We were beginning to feel pretty depressed and cynical, but Olson encouraged us as she stopped by the tins of tuna and pointed to the dolphin-safe trademarks now found on almost all brands. Customers can make a difference when they become aware of issues, she reminded us.

Not very long ago, fishermen used nets that trapped anything in their path, including dolphins, just to haul in the tuna. But because consumers protested, practices have changed.

In the same way, consumers protested the methods the Nestle company was using to encourage Third World women to bottle-feed their babies with formula. Nestle was boycotted. Now formula samples may no longer be given away free; a line of print on the tin says: "Breastfeeding is best for your baby"; and formula companies may no longer have pictures of chubby-cheeked babies on the tins.

There are trade-offs, of course. "Please don't take away my cake mixes," moaned one of our tour-takers, and we all knew how she felt. Sometimes, we'll take advantage of convenience to give more time to our other responsibilities. But our consciences have been raised. We're looking at alternatives. Supermarket shopping will never be quite the same again.

Agency offers fair prices to overseas artisans

... continued from page 1
expanded into at least 26 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces, the Canadian head office being located in New Hamburg, Ont. There are now seven outlets in British Columbia including Vancouver, Abbotsford, Penticton, Chilliwack, Powell River and Courtenay.

The idea is simple: offer a fair price to the craftsperson for his or her wares. The money is paid up front so no risk is taken by those who can least afford it. The low overhead of this non-profit, volunteer-driven organization allows savings to be passed on to consumers. Ten Thousand Villages is still affiliated with the MCC. The overseas workers, be they missionaries or aid workers, are often the front-line people of the organization. They seek out new handicrafts and contacts, judging what will sell, keeping in mind a fair trade price so the artisans can remain self-employed and self-sustaining.

Getting good value

Patsy, a first-time customer, kept repeating the words "wonderful" and "incredible" as she browsed the hundreds of items. She analyses her shopping here as going deeper than pure consumerism — getting good value for her dollar. Patsy's "global conscience" appreciates that money is going to those in need, "those less fortunate than we. That is very important to me."

Hugo Ciro, a native of Colombia, brought Ten Thousand Villages to Victoria. He says he is "overwhelmed with the good response from the community." Initially a "Christmas initiative," says Ciro, Ten Thousand Villages may become a year round, or at least a summer venture.

Coffee importing

In line with this effort, Ciro, with partner and Victoria pastor Stacey Toews, have created Level Ground Trading Ltd. This coffee importing endeavor attempts to break the defeating cycle of poor wages going to coffee growers. Farmers are offered a fair and constant price for their goods.

The first container of Cafe San Miguel arrived in Vancouver and is being distributed throughout Vancouver Island, Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Ciro, whose inkling of this began almost one year ago, is no stranger to the coffee bean; many of his relatives in Colombia are still in the coffee business.

An added "social dividend" is reinvested in local communities for health care, education and the like. To keep costs down and community spirit up, a co-operative roasts and prepares the coffee beans for export. And only those farmers whose main income derives from coffee are included in this co-operative. Large plantations often have multinational interests and are thus excluded from receiving the premium price.

Maybe in grocery stores soon

Currently, most of the coffee is being sold through the Ten Thousand Villages stores and through local churches. Toews envisions local supermarkets stocking the Cafe San Miguel and is currently working on such a deal with a Vancouver Island grocery chain. However, Toews laments that not all people are conscience driven and are concerned only with the bottom line.

When comparing business practices and the social conscience aspects of Level Ground Trading Ltd. and Ten Thousand Villages, Ciro says that the "two organizations are very much parallel." And of this positive comparison, he is proud.

For more information on these two organizations, drop in for a virtual cup of coffee at www.villages.ca or www.levelground.com/coffee

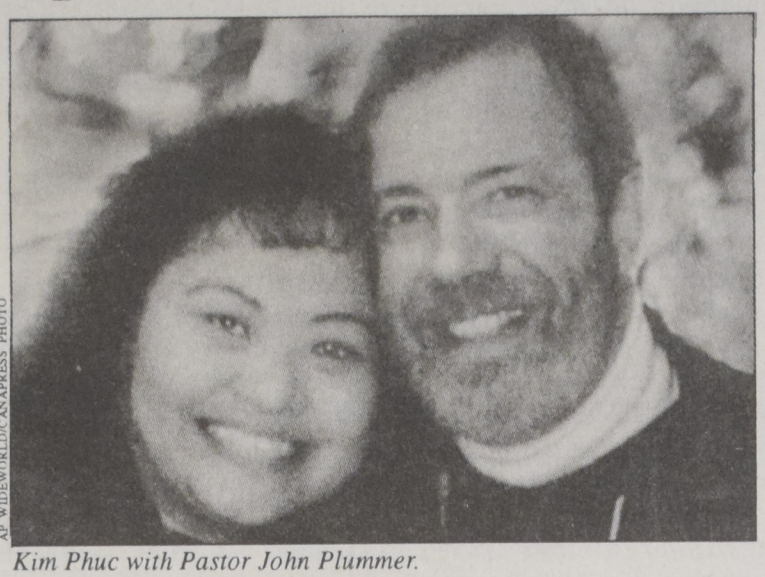
JEFF HOOGENDOORN

Hugo Ciro, a native of Colombia, brought Ten Thousand Villages to Victoria.

Pastor, Vietnam vet, admits he didn't drop napalm on girl

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — One of the most famous photos from the Vietnam war shows a nine-year-old girl running down a road, screaming in pain as napalm burns away her clothing. This year that girl, Kim Phuc, was speaking at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial when she met Pastor John Plummer, who said he was the man who ordered the attack. In an emotional meeting after her speech, she forgave him.

It was a great story — but it wasn't true. In a recent interview with the *Baltimore Sun*, Plummer acknowledged that he had lied.



AP WIDEWORLD/CANAPRESS PHOTO

Kim Phuc with Pastor John Plummer.

Fabric of lies

Plummer, the 50-year-old pastor of Bethany United Methodist Church in Purcellville, Virginia, originally told Phuc that he was the pilot who dropped the bomb, and in June he told Ted Koppel of ABC's "Nightline" that he had "ordered" the raid on the village of Trang Bang. In an October story for *Guideposts*, Plummer referred to "the attack I had called," and in a cable television documentary he said, "Every time I saw that picture I said, 'I did that. I'm responsible."

In fact, the pilot of the plane that dropped napalm on Trang Bang on June 8, 1972, was South Vietnamese, and Plummer's former superiors say he didn't have the authority to order attacks. Plummer said he never meant to deceive anyone. He claims he was simply caught up in the emotion at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the day Phuc spoke.

New MCC program offers overseas work experience for college, university grads

WINNIPEG, Man. (MCC) — Canadian university and college graduates seeking work experience and willing to live abroad are encouraged to apply to Mennonite Central Committee Canada's (MCC) new Youth Internship Program.

"Youth unemployment is a real concern in Canada. Even young people with university degrees have trouble finding work in their field," said Chris Derksen Hiebert, who co-ordinates the program for MCC.

"It's the dilemma of 'no experience, no job; no job, no experience'. With a year of work and international experience under their belt, the interns should have a much better chance of finding meaningful employment."

Making opportunities

The Youth Internship Program is designed to give Canadian university and college graduates an opportunity to use their educational training and skills in a one year international service assignment. Interns will have their expenses covered and receive a small monthly stipend.

The program is funded by the federal government's Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The first interns can be placed early in 1998, with a second round likely beginning in May 1998. MCC has openings for interns in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America in the fields of education, research/writing, engineering, business/management, mediation and agriculture, These are one-year terms. MCC is also open to receiving applications from potential candidates whose field of training is not included on this list.

For more information on the Youth Internship Program, please contact Chris Derksen Hiebert at 416-421-9078 or via e-mail chrisdh@web.net. Or contact the nearest MCC office at 1-888-MCC-6337.

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News Digest

Woman donates huge prize

SOMERVILLE, N.J. (AP) — Eleanor Boyer, a 73-year-old retiree, decided she didn't want to keep her $11.8 million (US) New Jersey state lottery prize. So she is giving away most of it to her church and her town. The donation stunned the congregation of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Brian Nolan, one of Boyer's pastors, comments, "Your faith doesn't teach you to give all your wealth away. There's just a deep spirit there."

Boyer has spent a lifetime of giving and praying, rising at 5:30 a.m. each morning to pray at home and then attend 7 a.m. mass.

"I always said if I won, I'd give half of it to the church," says Boyer.

Sunday shopping approved

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. — After an all-night debate in late December, the Newfoundland legislature has approved Sunday shopping in the province, reports the *Toronto Star*. The Opposition Tories argued that small businesses will suffer from the move, which is set to begin this month. But Liberal Premier Brian Tobin said consumers themselves will decide whether Sunday shopping is worthwhile.

Pets restricted in Singapore

SINGAPORE (AP) — Singapore is one of the world's 10 richest countries, but official statistics say that only four per cent of its households have dogs. That's because restrictions on pets are as tight, if not tighter, than Singapore's better-known bans on littering, spraying graffiti, chewing gum, jaywalking or spitting on the sidewalk.

Hit especially hard are residents of government-subsidized apartments that are home to almost 80 per cent of Singapore's three million people. The whole cat species is forbidden to tenants of such housing, although some strays live on the streets, mewing for handouts and scavenging near restaurants.

Deirdra Moss of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals says the law reflects Singapore's "highly organized" society. "Even many people who love animals don't keep them. And that is a pity, because pets are great stress-relievers."

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Editorial

Are there no limits to God's love?

In this issue of our paper you will find a meditation on the Day of Judgment. It is written by a Connecticut prisoner named Michael Ross. If you have not yet read this meditation, please stop reading this editorial right now and proceed to the article on page 12. Since my editorial is a reflection on that article, it makes more sense to read that article first.

In his article "Why does God delay the final judgment?", Ross explains in a very personal way why he thinks God delays that final day of reckoning. His explanation has everything to do with who Ross is and what he has done.

As a seasoned Christian reads the article, he or she will probably nod in agreement with the explanation that God's delay is an act of love. God does not want anyone to perish, but he wants all people to come to repentance.

But then we come to the part where Ross explains that God delayed the day of judgment because he wanted to save someone like him. Ross tells us that he has "murdered eight women in the most horrible manner." Our associate editor, Marian Van Til, recalls seeing Ross interviewed in a television documentary some time ago and she learned that this "most horrible manner" included torture and rape.

This admission on Ross' part is not something we should gloss over easily. This is shocking information. Imagine, being the parent of one of these eight women who has been tortured, raped and killed! For Canadians, images of Paul Bernardo and Clifford Olson come to mind. Americans might think of Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer. Surely someone who did to eight women what Michael did is most despicable. And to think that this person could be saved by Jesus Christ! To think that God would delay his coming because someone like Michael Ross needs to become part of his body of believers! Has God no shame? Is God not embarrassed to have someone like Ross represent him on earth?

Does *Christian Courier* have no shame publishing an inspirational message from a serial killer? Will next week's issue carry a study of Psalm 42 by Paul Bernardo — *Saint* Paul Bernardo?

Some 'sinners' are just badder

Is Ross not stretching things a bit when he quotes the passage in which Jesus sits down to dinner with sinners? After all, all of us are sinners, but not all of us are serial killers.

Of course, the term "sinners" in the context of what the Pharisees were accusing Jesus of means people who flagrantly violate public laws and morals. In that context many of us would not be sinners; but convicted prostitutes and thieves *would* be.

But even then, a prostitute is not the worst of "sinners," though many of us would rather not be caught having a meal with one, especially if the people around us knew us and her reputation. Serial rapists and killers, on the other hand, break the mold even of the classification "sinners."

Would Jesus have dinner with a Paul Bernardo? The discomfiting answer is an unequivocal Yes. I'm sure the public would be outraged and church leaders would be scrambling for circumstantial explanations to undo the public relations damage. But Jesus would probably end up telling a parable of the lost welfare cheque that was found.

Justice must be done

I don't know about you, but I had to blink a few times when I read what Ross had done *and* that he is now a brother in the Lord. In other words, I had to embrace him.

But let me make this perfectly clear. Accepting someone like Ross does not mean that we have to soft-peddle his crimes. (We're happy to say that Ross himself does not do this. He is clearly aware of the serious nature of his crimes.) Nothing that has happened to Ross — his conversion, his slow process of healing — should in any way affect the sentence he has received. Justice must be independent of the spiritual status of the criminal. Imagine what the relatives of the victims would think of the justice system if someone's conversion should soften any sentence. Does that make their pain and loss any less?

Nevertheless, the church should eagerly embrace sinners like Michael Ross. No justice system can prevent us from loving someone.

God's ways are far above us

A second thing we should do when dealing with criminals is realize the depth of our own sins. In the eyes of society we are not sinners, but decent citizens. In the eyes of God, however, we are no cleaner than is Michael Ross. God had to get his hands just as dirty to rescue us. How many victims have we created with our indifference, our selfishness, our judgmentalism and our lack of love?

If we could understand a tiny fraction of God's holiness and his constant love and faithfulness, we would shake in our boots because we could not possibly match that tiny fraction and we would come away feeling dirty and cheap. Consequently, we have to continually re-align our thinking about God's love. It's not like the love of the world, which is usually extended according to merit.

God does not want our death

Ezekiel 18 has an interesting explanation of how God deals with sinners: "If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? None of the righteous things he did will be remembered.... He will die," says God. But "if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die."

Now let's get this straight. If a good person turns evil, she dies; if an evil person turns good, she lives. A cynic might say, if you have to do evil, do it first and then repent, because it's the way you end up that matters.

But our reply to such a cynic should be: "Don't you get it? Its' all about God's love and God's grace." The same passage in Ezekiel 18 has God declaring that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God wants *everyone* to repent, to turn around 180 degrees. But those who once were doing right, and then turn 180 degrees towards evil, clearly reject God's grace and love. Whereas those who were evil never knew God's love and never rejected it. They never knew about love, period. They hated themselves as much as they hated others.

Isn't it amazing that God is not in a hurry because he wants even the greatest of sinners to repent? You and me? **BW**

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Letters

18 questions for the CRC board of trustees

Some time ago I wrote to CC as a member of the Christian Reformed Church and expressed concerns about how the denomination in general and our mission outreach in particular spends our quota dollars.

Certain persons, including Peter Borgdorff, executive director of CRC World Ministries, objected to my comments and assured the church that our funds are in good hands, managed well, and so forth.

We are now told that a California real estate corporation (IRM) with close ties to a certain CRC member has publicly announced that it is not currently in a position to honor its obligations to its investors, including the CRC. I don't know a thing about California law, but in Canada such an announcement is considered an act of bankruptcy.

Mr. Borgdorff has told certain church journalists that he does not believe it would be useful to disclose any information to the church at this time about these issues — a committee is looking into matters.

He's not the Pope

A charming response, and perhaps a sufficient one — were we Roman Catholics and Mr. Borgdorff the Pope. But certain of the priesthood of all believers, of whom I am a member, would like to know the following:

1. What is the relationship between the CRC board of trustees (past and present) and IRM?
2. Do conflict of interest guidelines exist for the investment of church money?
3. If there are no such guidelines, why not?
4. If there are such guidelines, were they complied with?
5. If not complied with, why not?
6. How much church money is invested?
7. Are we secured creditors?
8. If we are not secured creditors, why not?
9. If we are unsecured creditors, what are we likely to get on the dollar?
10. Is the corporation insolvent?
11. Will you make public audited and unaudited financial statements of IRM for the years since the CRC investment in the same commenced?
12. Who made the decision to invest in this corporation, and when?
13. Are there guidelines which govern the types of investments in which church funds may be invested?
14. If there are no such investment guidelines, why not?
15. If there are such investment guidelines, were they complied with?
16. If such investment guidelines were not complied with, why weren't they?
17. Who knew what when about the financial state of this corporation?
18. What steps, if any, were made, and when were they made, in order to minimize our exposure?

Several years ago, our church lost funds when an international bank ran into financial difficulty. To the best of my knowledge a full and frank accounting of how much money was lost was never made.

The CRC must appreciate that its members are more financially sophisticated than in the past. A calendar in the mail, a missionary visit to the local grade school and a comment to the effect that "we know best and are looking into matters" no longer pass muster with much of the laity.

I trust the committee of which Mr. Borgdorff speaks, together with the General Secretary of the CRC, will reconsider. It is imperative that there be absolute transparency concerning the management or apparent mismanagement of church funds.

John A. Tamming
Meaford, Ont.

What part of the suspect statement applies?

I've read and re-read a number of the letters that have recently appeared in CC following your editorial about gay/lesbian persons, and particularly the proposals by CPJ with regard to registered domestic partnerships and public policy. A couple of themes seem to emerge .

First, very few of the letters (and their authors) seem to be connected to any part of the world that I experience. The reality is that all of us already meet and engage gay/lesbian persons in the course of our jobs, schools, families, artistic communities, friends, universities, neighbors, churches, community associations, colleges, newspapers. The list could go on.

I wonder if those persons who appear so indignant with the views you expressed also take that position and the accompanying attitude with them when they encounter a gay person in the pew?

A second theme that seems to emerge is the apparent belief that it's possible to make a meaningful distinction between "loving the sinner but hating the sin." Although that distinction has always struck me as a distinction without a difference, others appear to find it useful.

Should we accept the saying, it then leads us to ask: What part of the distinction forms the basis for public policy development? If it is "loving the sinner," then surely good public policy should include all of us. On the other hand, if it is "hating the sin," then should it include any of us?

Jake Kuiken
Calgary, Alta.

Agree on the meaning of Christmas

Marian Van Til tackles an important issue in "In defence of Christmas-carol theology" (CC Dec. 5). It is her contention that many Christmas carols "present good basic theology." It may interest readers to know that Alan J. Hommerding, in *The Hymn* (46, no. 4: 45-48) argues for exactly the opposite point. He claims that very few well-known Christmas carols contain either explicit or implicit references to the salvific purpose of the Incarnation.

Amidst all this, my wife and I were reflecting this season on the fact that so many people today speak of the "true meaning of Christmas" — both Christians and non-Christians alike! These people are certainly not all referring to the same thing. Some suggest the meaning is giving rather than receiving, others that it is spending time with loved ones.

In light of Rev. Phipps' recent comments, one hopes that we, as a Christian community, may have the boldness to proclaim the true meaning: "Christ was born to save!" (*Psalter Hymnal* 355).

Although they disagree on the effectiveness of the theology of carols, thankfully writers like Van Til and Hommerding remind us that one thing we can and must all agree on: the "true meaning of Christmas."

Praise be to God!

Dave Vroege
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Re: stray cats and straying Christians

I loved your editorial about how God and Zulu hate divorce. I'm a softy when it comes to stray cats and children who come from dysfunctional homes. We had a young cat join us for a few months. He just showed up out of the blue and adopted our cat, Panda, as his father. We called him Zacheus because we found him in a tree. He was a little shy and some said he was too skittish or wild.

We tamed him, however, and he loved having his head and his tummy scratched. He played with Panda and with our dog, Sammy, and he climbed trees just like a squirrel. Now he has been adopted by twin boys in my classroom.

I also like Bert Hielema's page. He has a way with words that makes you smile and he hits home with some of his articles which helps us laugh at ourselves or realize how ridiculous we as Christians sometimes can be.

We make such a fuss about silly matters such as whether you have to be a male or a female in order to stand on a pulpit and expound the Word of God. My dad used to say, "If women are allowed to go into the *rimboe* (jungle) to bring the Good News to the people of Africa why can't women do the same in North America?" And my mother used to say, "The devil laughs when we as Christians are fighting."

Chris Vander Veen
Brantford, Ont.

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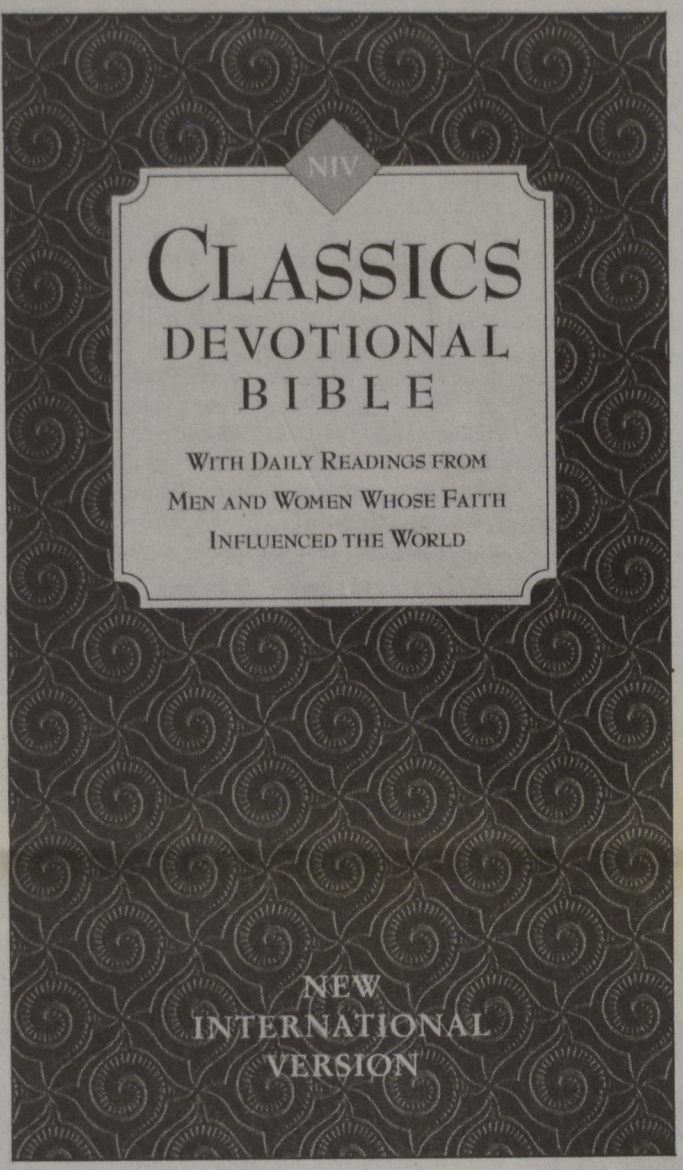
Book Review

Devotional Bible adroitly combines Scripture, great Christian literature

Marian Van Til



NIV Classics Devotional Bible

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996. 1544 pp.

Devotionals — daily readings with or instead of Scripture, which help us reflect on our Christian lives — are more than plentiful. But quantity doesn't imply quality. It takes care and some biblical (if not theological) acuity to make a beneficial choice so that over a year's time we know we're receiving "the whole counsel of God" from such devotional aids.

Zondervan has come up with an unusual solution in a book which is small enough to be easily carried around or packed in a suitcase.

The *NIV Classics Devotional Bible* is the entire New International Version of the Bible, plus 312 devotional readings which draw, in the publisher's words, "from the writings of nearly 2000 years of church history ... [which] will take you into the thoughts of well-known Christian authors, thinkers, theologians, hymn writers, poets, and pastors."

Integrity of subject

This devotional Bible's subtitle says it: "With Daily Readings from Men and Women Whose Faith Influenced the World." There is a reading for each weekday of the year, and one reading for the Saturday/Sunday of each weekend (thus 312, not 365 readings).

The readings are interspersed between the Bible passages to which they relate. At the top of each devotion there's both a Scripture verse and a passage referred to. The subject of each devotion is tied to the verse cited, and the passage reference provides the context in which that verse occurs.

For example, the first Monday devotional is called "Evolution is Mistaken for Explanation," by the great early 20th century Catholic poet G.K. Chesterton. The verse referred to is Gen. 1:1; the passage is Gen. 1:1-2:3. At the bottom of Chesterton's piece (and all the devotionals) are additional Scripture reading suggestions, in this case from Job 38, Ps. 104 and John 1.

(While the title of Chesterton's remarks may sound mundane, they are most interesting, and get you to think further about the Creation story you have just read in conjunction with Chesterton's piece.)

All of the pieces chosen give insight into the Scripture passages to which they relate.

150 authors

Authors included are such luminaries as theologians like Thomas a Kempis, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Karl Barth; preachers such as Henry Ward Beecher, Dwight L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon; writers like C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald, Thomas Merton, Leo Tolstoy; poets like Anne Bradstreet, John Bunyan, John Donne, John Milton, T.S. Eliot, Gerard Manley Hopkins; hymn writers John Newton, Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, Frances Havergal — about 150 in all.

In addition, other sources are drawn on, such as the Athanasian Creed, the Book of Common Prayer, the Didache and African-American spirituals. A section of author biographies is both helpful and interesting, and there's also a useful subject guide which lets you look up a subject and see how it's covered here.

This unique combination of the Bible and great Christian literature will make an excellent gift, both for Christians who are already familiar with these authors and for those who may have previously encountered only a few of them.

CRC publishes children's resume to combat prejudice

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRC Publications) — Believing that the battle against prejudice begins at an early age, a multicultural team of authors has produced a unique multimedia experience for children in grades 3-6: "Hand in Hand: Helping Children Celebrate Diversity."

Co-published by CRC Publications and Reformed Church Press "Hand in Hand" is now available for use in church school, day school and home-school settings.

"Hand in Hand" offers a rich diversity of experiences — art, drama, music, games, computer exploration. Bible and culture-based stories, even field trip opportunities — to help children respect and celebrate diversity among people while affirming their unity with others in Christ.

"Hand in Hand" can be used as a stand-alone course of five or more sessions or as a resource book to add a multicultural dimension to any curriculum. The resource includes an audio-cassette of songs and stories directed toward acceptance of all kinds of people.

"Hand in Hand" was created by a team representing African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic and Anglo cultures.

No 'quick fix'

The team views its work not as a "quick fix" for prejudice but as a beginning, a starting point in developing multicultural sensitivity in children by exposing them to the hard but rewarding work of living "hand in hand" with others in our multicultural society.

CRC Publications, the publishing arm of the Christian Reformed Church, publishes church school curriculum, periodicals, worship resources, devotional books and study materials on the Bible and current issues.

Call CRC Publications, toll-free, at 1-800-333-8300 for more information.

ABC extends run of *Nothing Sacred* despite dismal ratings

NEW YORK (EP) — In an industry where weak ratings usually lead to early cancellations, the Disney-owned ABC television network has ordered additional episodes of its lowest-rated program, the controversial *Nothing Sacred* (see CC review, Oct. 31, 1997, p. 11).

The New York-based Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has called the program is thinly veiled propaganda designed "to convince viewers that those Catholics who challenge the church's teachings on women and sexuality are more compassionate ... than those who uphold church teachings."

94th place

The television series about an unorthodox Catholic priest who constantly questions his church's teachings has led to a boycott by the Catholic League, and sharp criticism from other Christian leaders — but secular critics have generally praised the series.

It ranks 94th in the A.C. Nielsen ratings, helping to drag ABC down into third place (the network finished just ahead of the Fox Network in the recent sweeps).

ABC gave *Nothing Sacred* a full-season order of episodes, and will move it to Saturday night, where it won't have to compete with NBC's popular comedy line-up. Still uncertain is whether ABC will air an already-completed episode of the program in which a priest admits that he is a homosexual and is HIV-positive.

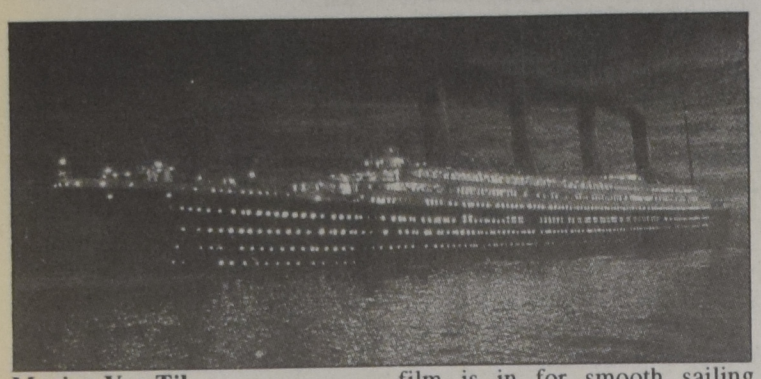
MONEY ...tips

(NC)—If you choose to invest in GICs, stagger their maturity dates over five years. This strategy will average out the interest wave and help compensate for any years of lower interest rates.

For financial planning and investment information visit http://www.investorsgroup.com on the World Wide Web.

Film Review

This *Titanic* floats — and how!



Marian Van Til

Titanic

Rated **PG**. *Stars Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio, Billy Zane, Frances Fisher, Kathy Bates, David Warner. Written and directed by James Cameron.*

Canadian director James Cameron and the story of the *Titanic* seem meant for each other. Cameron's film *Titanic* is a work of ... well, "titanic" proportions: epic in story and length (more than three hours) and costing more than any film ever made ($200 million, nearly $300 million when marketing is figured in). Cameron thrives on spectacle but at the same time is a stickler for detail. Every color, texture, fabric and costume related to the ship is exactly as history says it was (a 780-foot model ship was built and furnished).

Unlike the ship, however, Cameron's *Titanic* was able to avert disaster, if barely. He steered his grand film through major financial crises, many delays and months of extra filming (it was to have been released last June). Early audience reaction seems to indicate that the film is in for smooth sailing from now on, perhaps all the way to the Oscars.

Cameron, himself an avid diver, is obviously obsessed with the *Titanic*, but he wasn't out to make a documentary. This is a lofty, romantic, even slightly old-fashioned film whose centre is a love story between an upper-crust Philadelphia girl, Rose (Kate Winslet), and a lowly world-wandering artist from Wisconsin, Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio). Needless to say, the budding romance is not looked upon genially by Rose's entourage.

Truth through fiction

We get to know the ship itself through Rose and Jack and the other characters we come to know: Rose's obnoxious and filthy-rich fiance (Billy Zane), her fearful but snobbish mother (Frances Fisher), her fiance's thuggish manservant (David Warner).

These are fictional characters, created by Cameron. But they easily inhabit shipboard life alongside the real-life *Titanic* characters who have become almost legendary: the "Unsinkable Molly Brown" (a wealthy American whose earthiness and "new money" were shunned by the blue-bloods); tycoons John Jacob Astor and the Gugenheims; the ship's captain; *Titanic's* architect and its builder.

Why would Cameron create fictional characters when there were so many real people whose stories he could have told? That's an inevitable question, and brings up the old issue of to what extent a film based on an historical event should be "true."

In terms of how the ship looked, and how and why it sank on that fateful April day in 1912, Cameron's film is as close as one could hope to get to history. And in spirit, the whole film is accurate.

In Cameron's defence, having available only old interviews with a relatively small number of survivors (many of them children at the time, and all of whom are now dead), Cameron would have had to embellish any true story he might have used and "recreate" virtually all dialogue.

So why not have total control over a story of your own making? Cameron wanted his audience to fully understand the tragedy of this monumental story, and he believed he could best do that with the story he created.

Class struggle

The device also lets Cameron present Rose as a still-living 101-year-old *Titanic* survivor who tells her story to a boatload of mercenary salvage experts who are looking for a particular gem they believe to be on the sunken ship.

It turns out that Rose has direct connections to the gem, and as she tells her poignant story, the salvage guys have a change of heart. If that sounds pretty pat, and even corny, Cameron makes it work.

So too is Cameron's rich girl/poor boy love story effective and believable. And Cameron uses it to show up the most disgusting atrocity associated with *Titanic*, which for years wasn't talked about: that the class (read: wealth) distinctions observed aboard *Titanic* were so rigid and so deep that when the ship began to sink, third-class (steerage) passengers were actually locked in the ship's lower decks to drown like beasts so that first-class passengers could be saved.

Billy Zane (l.), Frances Fisher, Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio.

(At least one critic has pointed out the irony in Cameron's spending $300 million to denounce the rich. Cameron himself, however, actually took no director's salary, pouring that money into the film; he did get his six-figure screenwriter's fee.)

There were lifeboats enough for only half of the ship's 2,200 passengers — an omission probably based as much on hubris and absolute faith in the human ingenuity that crafted this "unsinkable" ship as on class distinctions.

To top it off, a number of the lifeboats were launched with far fewer than the 65 persons each boat held. Only one of them — finally — returned to the mostly lower-class passengers floating in the icy north Atlantic waters to try to pick up any still alive (they found just *six*).

Visiting a watery grave

We're drawn into the film immediately with footage shot by Cameron's crew of the *Titanic* as she rests today in her watery grave. (Cameron and his crew double as the mercenary salvage team of the film).

We stare fascinated as an underwater exploration vehicle comes upon the ghostly looking ship (it seems eerily appropriate that colors aren't detectable at this depth). The vehicle disgorges a miniature, unstaffed explorer which snakes its way through a corridor, into a stateroom, a bedroom....

This opening gives an inkling as to why we remain riveted to the screen for 3 1/4 hours. *Titanic* feels like one of the shortest long movies I've ever seen.

Flaws don't sink it

At the same time, many of the film's inhabitants are stock characters. Though Winslet and DiCaprio invest Rose and Jack with life and some depth, Rose's fiance is a selfish, abusive prig who is a mere caricature of the classic spoiled rich boy. That's partly Billy Zane's mediocre acting and partly the script's fault. We're left wondering why intelligent, openhearted Rose would marry such a total cad, despite his money.

The characters, in a sense, compete with the ship as the star of the show. And once the thing starts to sink (spectacular scenes), character development is not Cameron's main concern.

Yet the film persists in being engrossing enough that you don't dwell on or even notice its flaws until its over. And even then, the overall impact is visceral enough to swamp those flaws.

Church

Reformed Church fight with controversial pastor ends

Rhem and Muskegon Classis settle lawsuit

MUSKEGON, Mich. (URNS) — The Rhem controversy in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) is finally over. After two years of church wrangling, a civil lawsuit, a heresy trial, the deposing of Rev. Richard Rhem on sexual misconduct charges, and massive media attention not only from local media but also the *New York Times* and ABC News, the RCA's Muskegon Classis and Christ Community Church of Spring Lake announced December 18 that they "have agreed to a settlement of all the issues in the dispute between them."

Congregation will pay

According to the official announcement from the RCA's New York City offices, "the agreement will enable the classis and Christ Community Church to proceed with their respective ministries without costly and time-consuming litigation between them in the civil courts."

The agreement, which includes $400,000 in payments by the congregation to the classis over the next ten years, specifies that the classis will release the congregation and property of Christ Community Church from the denomination so it can continue ministry in its current location and building.

The settlement, reached after "an intense two-day process of 'facilitated mediation,'" involved the classis, the church, attorneys for both, and six denominational representatives including the top RCA official, general secretary Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, all of whom met in western Michigan for negotiations.

The Muskegon Classis even called a special meeting to approve a proposed settlement, and then gave its negotiators authority to act on a settlement when the proposal wasn't ready in time for the special session.

A range of problems

The controversy began when Christ Community Church allowed another church composed of practicing homosexuals to meet on its premises. But the conflict soon expanded into an investigation by the Muskegon Classis into Rhem's belief that salvation is possible apart from Christ. Eventually classis rebuked Rhem for heresy and began to investigate a charge from an organist and former parisher of Rhem's: "gross sexual misconduct."

Christ Community unilaterally declared its independence from the RCA when the classis insisted on investigating the sex charges, and later sued the classis in civil court seeking to force the denomination to allow the church to leave with its building. Classis eventually deposed Rhem on sex charges in a trial he refused to attend and whose verdict his church does not recognize.

Lessons learned

Representatives of the church and classis could not immediately be reached for comment. But Rev. Ken Bradsell, director of policy, planning, and administrative services at the RCA's New York City offices, and a member of the denominational team at the negotiations, said the RCA leadership had been concerned about the controversy since it flared up and was glad to be part of the solution.

Said Bradsell, "If there was any way to find a solution to this without going into the civil courts, we didn't think it was proper for the church to settle its suits through litigation. It's not a good way to spend mission money."

Bradsell noted that the settlement included a plan to provide for ministry to the disaffected minority in Christ Community Church, estimated at about a hundred members of a 2800-member church. "These people have been deeply hurt, they need care, and we hope the classis is able to help them,"said Bradsell. "We also hope and pray that Christ Community Church is able to move forward as an independent congregation and provide a deep and meaningful ministry."

Nigerian churches demand return of schools

Obed Minchakpu

JOS, Nigeria (COMPASS) — Nigerian churches have demanded the immediate return of all Christian mission schools taken over by the government in 1976, many of which were later converted into Islamic educational institutions.

The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), an association of Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches, stated in a strongly worded letter to the Nigerian government: "The federal government is urged to return to the appropriate church agencies those secondary schools and teacher training colleges which were snatched away from them."

According to the secretary-general of the council, C.O. Williams, "The handover will enable the church to reconstruct a solid foundation on which the super-structure of the tertiary education of our children will be built. The future greatness of Nigeria depends, to an unlimited extent, on laying of such a firm foundation for a durable tertiary education," he added.

The Christian council also lamented the poor state of education at all levels saying that concerned parents and well-meaning citizens had watched helplessly while the schools were reduced to "mere phantoms of their former glory and greatness."

Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Rev. Olubunmi Okogie, said that for any meaningful progress to be made in the educational sector in Nigeria, schools forcefully taken over by the government must be returned to the churches who are willing and have the resources to manage them.

The government of Nigeria is allegedly hesitant to return the schools to church control, since most were converted into Islamic institutions.

Sudan releases Presbyterian pastor after beating

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — Sudan has released a Presbyterian pastor in the southern city of Juba after three weeks of detention, which included three days of beatings. They arrested the pastor, Idris Nalos, on July 9 and released him July 30.

On July 9, authorities searched Nalos's office and took him to police headquarters, where he had to sit on a chair until the following night. He then shared a cell with five others. One prisoner died after "severe torture," Nalos wrote.

Two weeks after his detention began, an "interrogating committee" arrived. He and his cellmates were subjected to four hours of excercises, then made to lie down for two hours. On July 26, he was taken by car to another site, where he was beaten while standing. Once, when he fainted with his hands tied, he fell and broke some teeth. After three days he was released.

Although no one told Nalos why he was detained, police asked a youth arrested with him if he had prayed with Nalos. Nalos survived a grenade attack in 1992, and had been interrogated for two days in 1995. He has planted five churches since 1982.

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Extremist Hindus gear up to 'win' India and 'neutralize' Christians

HONG KONG (Compass) — The militant Hindu group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ended a three-day closed door strategic meeting in Nasik with plans to make India a Hindu nation.

Top RSS leaders and more than 100 local leaders attended the meeting from Oct. 30 to Nov. 2. Among the things discussed were steps to counter the activities of Christians in the country by strengthening co-ordination among the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) and other pro-Hindu organizations.

The RSS also plans to open 500 schools in Orissa to "neutralize" what it called the activities of Christians and promote the re-conversion of converted tribals.

The joint general-secretary of the RSS, Mr. Sudarshan, said one of the resolutions passed was to give the BJP the freedom to capture and retain national power by the year 2002 and realize the dream of making India a Hindu country.

He said the RSS had asked at least four pro-Hindu organizations to gear up "for the victory of BJP" that year.

Sudarshan also predicted that in the 21st century there would be "an explosion of *Hindutva* (Hindu culture) across the world" that would re-unite the divided India.

Analysis

Chinese central government intends to eliminate house churches

Paul Davenport

(COMPASS) — Three new internal Chinese documents have recently surfaced which clearly show that the Chinese government at a high level is intent on stamping out all unregistered Christian activity, whether Catholic or Protestant.

The documents emanate from three different provinces: Hebei, Liaoning and Henan. Significantly, Hebei is the centre for underground Catholic activists loyal to the Vatican, while Henan for two decades or more has been the centre for unregistered Protestant house church Christians.

The documents consist of three detailed articles written by correspondents of the government-controlled New China News Agency (NCNA) for internal circulation to top government cadres.

They are dated April 11, 1997, and show conclusively that the central government is behind the recent drive to register all unofficial places of religious worship and to shut down those which refuse to comply.

'Reorganizing' Catholics

The article about Hebei begins uncompromisingly: "Since 1995 Hebei province has increased its efforts to reorganize the Catholic Church at the grassroots level in the villages, and to unite and win over the religious masses....

In just over six months [the Hebei Provincial Communist Party Committee] has successfully prohibited a series of large-scale illegal religious meetings, scattered the leadership structure of the underground forces, and, in accordance with the law, sealed up and destroyed the churches and meeting points of the underground forces."

There are 111 villages with meetings of more than 100 Catholics, and 267 grassroots Catholic leaders. The reporter stated that since September 1995 the provincial Hebei government and the municipal Baoding government has taken co-ordinated action to "totally purify and reorganize" the Catholic Church.

To this end, they set up "religious affairs committees" in all the Catholic villages. These took control of the churches, placing them under the control of the village Communist Party organs to ensure "direct control."

A strict registration campaign was also initiated: all churches and meeting-points which had already been torn down, sealed up or dispersed were prohibited from being reopened.

'Illegality' in Liaoning

The New China News Agency correspondent begins his article: "Liaoning province took three months to unleash a special 'struggle' to suppress illegal Protestant and Catholic activities according to law."

The term "struggle" has very Maoist overtones and signals a hard-line policy against religious believers.

He further reveals that the Public Security Bureau (PSB) in Liaoning is concerned about the increase in such illegal activities in many areas of the province.

The article highlights evangelistic efforts by American and Korean Christians, especially by means of gospel radio, to influence the village people. South Korean Christians are accused of using tourism, commerce, student exchanges and investment as means of evangelization of the strong Korean "minority" in the province.

"According to the PSB in Shenyang and Dalian, in recent years South Korean churches have infiltrated people 862 times into Liaoning, they have trained 208 illegal house church evangelists and planted 33 new churches."

The article also stresses that in many places in Liaoning, Protestant house church evangelists and Catholic "underground" priests have successfully set up churches totally outside government control.

One house church leader who had broken away from the government-controlled Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) is quoted as having converted more than 2,000 people in Shenyang, Anshan and Dalian.

Similarly, an underground Catholic bishop and his priests are stated as having rallied more than 1,200 people to their side away from the government-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association.

Gospel radio effective

The article gives interesting evidence of the effect of gospel broadcasting within China. In several cities in Liaoning, people are described as listening to gospel radio and then setting up their own Christian meetings. The authorities took co-ordinated action, and mobilized the grass-roots Party organs to "resolutely exterminate illegal Protestant and Catholic organizations, and split and destroy their underground forces."

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

"Underground" Hmong Christians listen to the gospel via radio.

The most interesting document is that written about Henan province: "Infiltration and sabotage activities by foreign religious forces have increased greatly in recent years, so the situation of religion in Henan is not an optimistic one. In particular, illegal activities by Protestants and Catholics stand out and are an important source of social and political instability in the province."

This echoes concerns expressed recently by the leadership in Beijing that social and political stability must remain the top priority and that religion must not be used to undermine the stability.

In Henan the Public Security Bureau has waged a "special struggle" against "heretical cults" for nearly two years. But at the grassroots level it is admitted that Party control of religion in Henan is weak, and that illegal religious activities continue to increase.

Spreading like fire

"According to the Public Security Bureau illegal religious activities have spread to 112 cities and counties in Henan (out of a total of 130)."

"At present there are more than 10 cults which wave the banner of Christianity and have led astray 18,000 people." (Here some of the cults are enumerated; at least one is actually an evangelical group.)

"In addition there are 3,315 Christian house church evangelists in Henan who are mainly without a permanent home, but who travel around evangelizing.

"According to the PSB there are already 5,212 unregistered house churches, which is 1,141 more than those meeting-points registered with the Religious Affairs Bureau.

"Some of the older denominations such as the Seventh Day Adventists and the True Jesus Church are secretly linking up and hoping to restore their organizations throughout the province and, indeed, throughout China.

"There is a serious problem with underground Catholic activities. Some priests have linked up with the underground Catholic Bishop Fan in Hebei, as well as with overseas Catholic forces [i.e. the Vatican], and with the aid and support of the pope they ordain priests and bishops, and attack the Catholic Patriotic Association...."

This internal document shows clearly that, from the government's point of view, Henan is virtually out of control so far as both Protestant and Catholic activities are concerned.

While not all the house churches or TSPM meeting-points may be totally orthodox in belief, the majority probably are. They total over 9,000 churches as opposed to only 690 belonging to the heretical sects.

Allowing for other smaller cults, which have not been included in the article, we are on fairly strong ground in surmising that out of some 10,000 broadly Protestant Christian churches and meeting-points in Henan:

* 50 per cent belong to unregistered but largely evangelical house churches.

* 40 per cent belong to registered and largely evangelical TSPM churches/meeting-points.

* 10 per cent belong to various cults, heresies and extremist groups.

Conclusions

Correspondents for the official New China News Agency wrote all three articles. There is no way they could be circulated to cadres in "Internal Reference News" without top-level government approval. All the media are strictly censored and controlled in China.

Each article quotes provincial Communist Party leaders as volunteering information about co-ordinated drives against unregistered Protestants and Catholics in their provinces. There is no way such lengthy campaigns could be undertaken with the co-operation of many different government agencies without the full approval and support of the central government.

High-level fear in action

There can be no doubt that these anti-religious drives are a direct result of high-level decisions taken by the top leadership of China at various secret Party meetings held in recent years to discuss the problems posed by religion, and Christianity in particular.

The fact that Hebei and Henan are singled out as the provinces where there are the most underground Catholics and unregistered house church Protestants, respectively, is also highly significant.

There can only be one conclusion — the massive increase in repression and campaigns to enforce registration of all Christians are not merely the whim of local Maoist cadres, but are the result of a consistent policy planned at the highest level of the Chinese Communist Party.

The documentation must be regarded as conclusive. It proves that the thousands of Christians who have written out of China over the last two years reporting an increase in pressure have been telling the simple truth.

Feature: Interview

Creation is our principal teacher about God

An interview with Cal De Witt

Alberta faces a large number of environmental challenges that have an impact on agriculture and invite Christian responses. The province depends heavily on the petroleum industry for revenue, and the government seems bent on reducing the deficit at almost any cost. As a result, environmental issues often do not get the attention they need.

It seemed all the more urgent, therefore, that the annual Earthkeeping convention held on November 21 at the Nisku Inn in Leduc examine environmental health concerns and lifestyles that leave marks on the earth.

I met and listened to keynote speaker Dr. Calvin De Witt, an internationally known Christian advocate of caring for creation. De Witt is a professor of environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin, director of the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, and an author of many articles and books. He has received many awards, including the Friends of the United Nations Environmental Achievement Award.

De Witt inspired listeners with his unique views as he enlarged on concepts found in the first chapters of Genesis. He urged us to observe sabbath in relation to creation, and gave insights on the Hebrew words abad and shamar found in Genesis 2:15. The words can mean "to serve" and "to keep," and he challenged members to serve creation and to keep it, in the same sense that God keeps and blesses his children.

De Witt took time from his schedule to share his thoughts and insights with Christian Courier *readers.*

Jessie Schut

CC: ***In the '70s, when you began your career, the "back to the earth" movement was in full swing. Do you think that generally there's less concern for the environment among people today?***

CDW: I think the whole society, young people as well as older people, are drifting towards an imaginary world, created by images portrayed in advertising, on television and even, interestingly enough, in nature films. We are increasingly being alienated from the creation.

I often ask my students to make a sketch of the starship *Enterprise*, and list the five principal leaders. Most have no problems with that. Then I ask them to do the same thing for their town, to sketch the town from a bird's-eye view and list the five principal leaders. Most have to think hard about that.

We're increasingly developing an imaginary world, and thinking that it is real, while we're putting the real world off to the side, thinking it is not important. This, in Christian terms, is alienating ourselves from what God has made. Apart from the Scriptures, what God has made — creation — is our principal teacher about God.

When you're working on a farm, you observe the cycles of weather, the growth of twigs and shoots, the germination of seeds, soil eroding from the land that's not been carefully stewarded. Those are immensely important things that God teaches us through creation, but there's a tremendously decreasing trend of people living and working on farms. We are cutting ourselves off, each generation more and more, from that kind of teaching.

People think increasingly that food comes from the store, that creation is external to the normal business of life, that it's relatively unimportant to dollar bills and stocks and bonds, and that we can pretty much follow the eclectic.

CC: ***Do you think that may be part of the reason why, for instance, Alberta is against any kind of tax on petroleum? Is it because they're in their ivory towers and don't see what's happening to Creation?***

CDW: No, I don't think that's the reason they're against environmental protection. Whatever threatens to change "business as usual," we often find ourselves against.

Change presents a threat to the way we make money, the way we earn our daily bread, the way we lay up treasures for our retirement. It is curious that what we are very prone to do is to rewrite our knowledge of the world to match our behavior in such ways that it will support what we are doing.

So this is what is happening, in issues of global warming, ozone depletion, of endangered species, of soil erosion, of stream pollution. We rationalize the status quo, in order not to correct our ways, and this approach is becoming rampant in our society.

PHOTOS: MARIAN VAN TIL

We have in the last 200 years been successful in creating a godless economics, a godless biology, a godless politics — and by saying "we," I mean our society as a whole. And so we now will speak of the market using words that we might once have used for the Creator. And we'll say, "The market will decide" or "The market will correct itself," as though the market is a person.

But there is no person there. We're putting the ethical teachings of the Scriptures to the side while we embrace the market as the arbiter of our ethics. The market is a remarkable provision by God to allocate scarce resources, so it is a servant of our society, a gift. But we have transformed this gift into our master, and through it are increasingly losing our connection with our biblical roots.

CC: ***Where do Christians fit into that scheme?***

CDW: The interesting thing to do here is to take, for example, Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and write the antithesis, the opposite, down beside it, and then see which we really believe. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" — the opposite would be, "Blessed are those who have power, and exercise that power, for they shall inherit the earth."

I would propose that the latter is what we're living by. The way society works, we look out for Number 1, pursue excellence and become better than the rest as we work our way up the ladder.

My own view is that the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the teachings of the New Testament, counter the social Darwinist tendancies we have as human beings to go it on our own, to compete in order to survive, to compete hard in order to rise to the top. These Darwinian principles govern the [way the] biological world [is seen], and while we [as Christians] oppose such teachings in the biological world, we become proponents of the principles in our society and in our social world.

We often promote the survival of the fittest, aggressive competition. We take these evolutionist Darwinian terms and somehow make them Christian principles for how we should live on earth. And I think that's what Christ is teaching against.

I think Christ and the New Testament are saying, basically, do not yield to these tendencies that are part and parcel of us, but counter them. Instead, what we tend to do is rationalize these things, and "Christianize" them.

CC: ***Isn't that kind of frightening?***

CDW: It is. I think we are running a tremendous risk of losing the teachings of Jesus. We are embedded, and we are creating and supporting an economy that pretends it's not part of God's economy.

The real economy (look up the definition of economy in the dictionary) is the remarkable means whereby God balances the various components of creation. But in recent decades we have supplanted this idea of economy with an economy of dollars and cents, and we have stuffed the whole of the universe into a category that fits within our economics. It's an arrogant replacement by us, a displacement of the whole creation making it a tiny piece of our economy.

The truth is, our human economy is a tiny piece of the economy of the universe. And you can't stuff the whole creation into whatever categories you want to name: externalities, resources, or something like that.

That's where the struggle is right now, There is an economy of the atmosphere, and an economy of the hydrologic cycle, and an economy of soil and soil building, and we're pretending that this economy must yield to the economy of Wall Street.

As a Christian, my translation of that is that we think we can place God's economy as a subsector of the human economy. That's the height of arrogance.

[We're ignoring] one of the major teachings of the Old Testament: don't try to build your economy — your tower — in a way that you claim it is bigger and better than life. Genesis 1-11 is a description of the human capacity to be dissatisfied with the gifts of God's creation and say that we can do it one better. That's what we've been doing: we've thought we were doing creation one better all the time.

CC: ***Often when you look at the earth, you don't even think of praising God because it's such a mess.***

CDW: Unfortunately we're doing that with a good part of God's world. We're doing it because we think that converting the wonderful capital of the earth into dollars is really what wealth is about.

But of course much of the wealth that God has given us is embodied in the forests that produce oxygen and dioxides; it's embodied in the seas that support this myriad of life; yet it seems it's only when we put these creatures into marine aquariums that they begin to have worth to people.

That's because we can charge admission. But I'd maintain that the real worth of these creatures is in their praising God in creation. That has nothing to do with monetary value, but it has a lot to do with the capacity of creation to bring God praise. And through it to teach us who God is as Creator of heaven and earth.

CC: ***You said that one of the leading environmental ethicists of this generation is saying that maybe the church has the answer.***

CDW: Yes, Max Oelschlaeger has a book, remarkably titled *Caring for Creation*, in which he describes what he calls his conversion from believing that Judeo-Christians were the cause of the environmental crisis, to believing that the church is the last, best solution to this crisis. He calls it eco-crisis. He says "The church is the last best chance for addressing eco-crisis."

CC: ***Do you believe that too?***

CDW: I think so. I think so.

CC: ***Is the church doing that?***

CDW: No, it's not. It's beginning to awaken. There is something happening, which most all of us are resisting, but it can be described as re-membering our Creator. Putting God together again — back together again in our minds.

God was never apart in reality, but we have so separated God as Savior from God as Creator that we often have put ourselves into a frame of thinking that says, "As long as we believe in God as Savior we don't have to believe in him as Creator." And we are now re-membering God as our Creator.

CC: ***That fits in with the idea of "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Perhaps our youth are the hope for change.***

CDW: That's right. Saying "God is Savior" doesn't work unless he is also Creator. And we have forgotten this. If you abuse creation and through it shake your fist in the face of God, and then turn around and say, "But he saved me," it doesn't make sense.

The younger you are, the clearer it is that this doesn't make sense. Because as you become accustomed to separating God as Creator from God as Savior, it becomes more difficult to see that you've done it.

But as you come on fresh and new as a young person, and you really believe in the Triune God, and you see this fracturing, you may well be able to handle holding things together.

CC: ***You say you have hope.***

CDW: (Hesitates) Yes...I have hope ... but it is mainly through the church, and the church is sleeping. And the church has become increasingly captive to the interests that degrade creation, because that's where its resources mostly come from.

CC: ***Financial, you mean?***

CDW: Yes, financial. So the hope comes from simple Christians, and from some pretty sophisticated Christians who have decided to convert, like heads of major corporations and business people.

There's nothing wrong with business and industry if it operates under the constraints of biblical stewardship. But curiously, most of what we do as Christians is indistinguishable from what most of the rest of the world is doing, and that's because we have invented a godless economics.

We have invented an economics that has freed itself from the constraints of biblical stewardship. And we rationalize that we can't free ourselves from these constraints because then we will lose our competitive edge. Which is a Darwinian term for maintaining survival of the fittest. So, if we want to be fit, we can't be stewards.

Denying Darwinian priciples in creation, we find the very same people supporting them religiously in the way they live. So religiously fighting them in the biological world, they're religously supporting them in the social world.

We know more about our own human economy — that's what we've been versed in — and we know next to nothing about creation's economy. Once you discover that ignorance, and questions open up, it's not like opening a door for which there's a little textbook that tells you what to do.

CC: ***What are the simple people supposed to do?***

CDW: They're supposed to learn, obviously. And live faithfully on the land God has given them. And there are many that are doing that. It's not easy, because the principalities and the powers restrain and restrict.

I would maintain that the constraints of biblical stewardship should be on all of our activities, on all of our economic activity. But we're in a situation in which all of our economic activity provides the constraints on stewardship. So we've turned the tables.

Jessie Schut is a regional reporter for Christian Courier. She lives in Edmonton.

Feature

Why does God delay the final judgment?

A prisoner on death row contemplates the end of time

Michael B. Ross #127404

The end time is the end of all things and all life as we know it. It's a terrible time, a very frightening time. A time when "the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10).

But as fearsome as that time will be, it also promises to be the most glorious of times. There will be a terrible and painful transformation from the limited experience that we have now to what God says we will have with him.

It is the time of the final judgment, when all people will be gathered before God and the righteous and just will be separated from the unrighteous and unjust "just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:32).

It is the time when the ungodly will be cast into the depths of eternal damnation, while the godly ascend to "a new earth in which righteousness dwells" as our Lord has promised.

God is not slow

But what is God waiting for? The righteous are sometimes very impatient, secure in their knowledge of salvation, eager to reap the rewards promised by God, and just as eager to see all sinners punished for their transgressions. They are sometimes quick to condemn. "We deserve salvation," they cry: "The ungodly deserve damnation. What is God waiting for?"

God is love. And one way he shows this love is through his infinite patience — not just for the righteous, but for the transgressors. If all that God cared about were the righteous, then the end would have come centuries ago.

But God cares for *all* of us, and that includes even the greatest of sinners. God wants *all* of us to find our way home to him. He does not want to leave anyone behind. "The Lord is now slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Not beyond redemption

I am one of the greatest of sinners. I have murdered eight women in the most horrible of manner. Many of the righteous believe that I have no place in "a new earth in which righteousness dwells," and that instead I should be condemned to eternal damnation.

Not too long ago I would have agreed with them. I had given up on myself. I couldn't see beyond my bloodstained hands. I couldn't see beyond the anger and hatred in my heart. I was consumed by an evil sickness that made me subhuman. And I believe that I was beyond redemption. I couldn't believe in myself; I couldn't forgive myself; I couldn't love myself. And if I couldn't do these things, how could I expect God to love me?

But God *is* love. And God *does* love me. I can't say that I fully understand why God loves someone such as I — one of the greatest of all sinners — but he does. This is exactly what God's love is. It isn't a love that is exclusively saved for only the righteous. It isn't a love that is exclusively saved only for the deserving. It is an unconditional love that is offered to *everyone*. Even offered to someone like me.

Only the sick

God wants *all* of us to come home to him. That is why he sent Jesus to us. Remember how Jesus ate at the tax collector's home with a variety of sinners and outcasts? Remember his words to the Pharisees who were outraged that Jesus would associate with such sinners? His words were: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.... I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt.9:12,13).

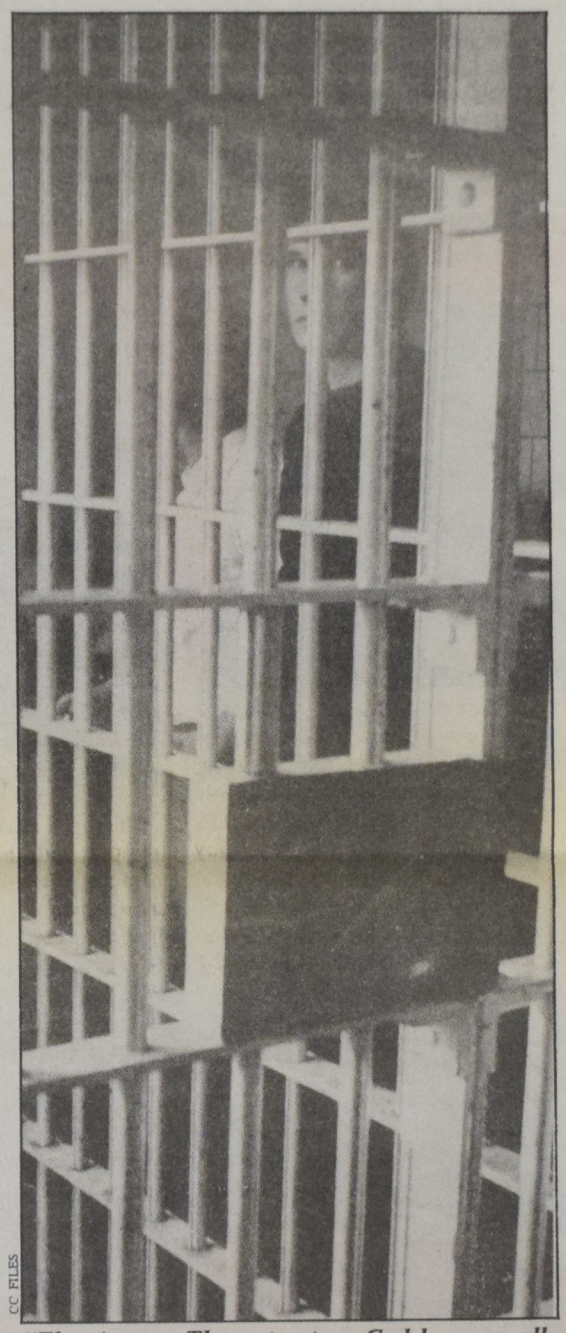
The sinners. The outcasts. The transgressors. God loves us all. And he is reaching out to us all. His greatest wish is that we *all* will return to him. In *The Living Bible* version of Matthew 9:13 Jesus says: "For I have come to urge sinners, not the self righteous, back to God."

It is easy to welcome the righteous and it is easy to reject the sinners. That is what we all tend to do. As theologian Dr. Edward Gabriele wrote: "We are quick to moralism and slow to love. We who have been forgiven much and embraced by a compassionate God, are too slow, if not totally unwilling, to be accepting, forgiving, compassionate and loving."

But God doesn't take the easy way out. He doesn't turn away from us — we may turn away from him, but God will never turn away from us. And he doesn't give up on us, even when we have given up on ourselves. He works to transform sinners into the righteous.

This isn't easy, and it takes time. But God is merciful enough to give us that time. And that is what God is waiting for.

Transformation takes time, and is quite often painful. The righteous don't fully appreciate this, but sinners like myself understand this all too well.



CC FILES

"The sinners. The outcasts.... God loves us all. And he is reaching out to us all. His greatest wish is that we all will return to him."

A long process

My personal transformation took years — it was a long and painful process of self-realization and growth — and I'm not finished yet. Even Paul recognized personal transformation as an ongoing process when he wrote in his letter to the Philippians: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Phil.3:12).

God got his hands dirty with me. I was covered with evil, as sinful as they come. I was filthy in the eyes of the Lord. I didn't deserve his help. I didn't deserve his love.

You may be thinking that it is written that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God — that none of us deserve his help or his love, or his forgiveness. But I have sinned far more than most, and in far more egregious a manner than most.

Yet as filthy and repulsive as I was, God wasn't afraid to roll up his sleeves and reach down into that dark, dank pit of evil to give me, the greatest of sinners, a hand up to the light.

It didn't happen overnight. There is no such thing as an instant victory over sin. It is a long, ugly, painful process. And it only happens because God has the patience and the love to give us the time to allow that transformation to take place.

A lump of yeast

I recently read some words which I think illustrate my point. Rev. Marvin Moore wrote in his book *Conquering the Dragon Within:*

The entrance of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is not like turning on a light switch that instantly dispels all darkness throughout the room. It's more like dropping some yeast into a lump of dough. The yeast penetrates slowly, and has to be kneaded in. As the yeast spreads though the dough, each part that it touches is changed, causing it rise.

That's how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. The Holy Spirit is a principle of life that God drops into our minds and hearts, and as time goes on, the Spirit touches various parts of our character — our inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil — and changes them.

I was one tough lump of dough, and it took a lot of kneading before the Holy Spirit began to influence who I was. It took a lot of time and effort — not just on my part, but on the part of God who didn't give up on me and touched me with the Holy Spirit, and on the part of a very special priest, who, like God, refused to give up on me, no matter what.

God will wait

There are a lot of others out there like me. Sinners on whom the righteous have given up. But God hasn't given up on them. And God will wait whatever time it takes to bring them to his glorious light.

The day of "a new earth in which righteousness dwells" will come. Perhaps not as soon as some might wish, but it will come as promised. It's just that God is in no hurry.

He gives every possible opportunity for even the greatest of sinners to repent and transform their lives for his glory.

Michael Ross has been a condemned man on Connecticut's death row since June 1987. He is currently under a stay of execution pending the resolution of the appeals process. He expects to be executed before the year 2000.

Opinion

Former development worker questions foreign aid

Funds don't all go to the needy

Peter Ysselstein

This article is in response to a recent international bulletin lamenting Canada's decline in foreign aid giving.

Hooray for giving less. The only people who are disappointed are the despots who can no longer fill their pockets to the brim. The other groups who might be disappointed are federal bureaucrats and the foreign aid workers whose jobs depend on the fund received from governments and private organizations. So when they lament Canada's lowered position on the fund status ladder, they are really lamenting their own possible loss of employment.

You will also notice in the news report, the emphasis on the prestige/pride factor, how others view us, but noting in the effectiveness of our aid giving.

I worked for a non-government organization as an agricultural consultant and community developer in Bangladesh for several years. No one would dispute that Bangladesh is a poor country. During my tenure there, I collected a scrapbook full of Bangladesh newspaper articles describing the massive theft of foreign aid.

"Unfortunately the good intent of foreign aid has had the opposite effect. It has instigated a cycle of violence, war, dictatorships, famine and widescale corruption."

Pilfered grain

A common headline would read: "Food Grain Pilfered from Foreign Grain Ships Waiting in Habor" — country boats would pull up alongside foreign ships and help themselves.

People working on "food for work" projects would only receive a fraction of the grain owed them while the balance would go to the boss of the project, usually the local politician head. I could go on and on, this is only the tip of the iceberg.

In the Bangladesh countryside, you would often see the remnants of a failed irrigation scheme cooked up by a United Nations oganization, costing millions of dollars. Many aid receiving countries literally have hundreds of donor agencies both private and government crawling all over each other and interfering.

No wonder the locals are often confused and out shopping for a donor who can give them the best deal. Over time, national development workers gained enough know how and experience to write-up wonderful sounding aid applications on paper and then solicit funds from abroad for their phantom projects.

Collective good feeling

I still chuckle upon hearing the details from my Bangladeshi friend who worked for an FAO project in northern Bangladesh.

When inspectors arrived from abroad to satisfy themselves of the success of an irrigation project they were funding, the tour guide unfortunately had to mislead by pointing to the neighboring rice fields of farmers (now instant project lands with stakes and all). Apparently they showed a lot better than the FAO project fields.

Aid giving by the Canadian government probably serves the following purpose; it gives us a collective good feeling. When guilt propaganda is thrown around our necks, we pull out our cheque books, like washing blood off our hands.

What is the result of foreign aid? Well, it has directly resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of lives. Why would one want to become the head of state of an impoverished nation unless there was a Silver Lining. MONEY! It's like winning the lottery; and who wouldn't fight for millions of dollars of foreign aid loot?

Only a short while ago, it was reported that Canadian mining companies were paying large sums of money to a rebel group fighting a civil war in Africa to safeguard access and rights to mineral deposits.

Has opposite effect

Yes, the rewards are very great and every reason for a good fight to reach a top position in government. Who hasn't heard of a dictator with a fat foreign bank account?

Unfortunately the good intent of foreign aid has had the opposite effect. It has instigated a cycle of violence, war, dictatorships, famine and widescale corruption.

COURTESY PETER YSSELSTEIN

"Wheat shipments to Bangladesh are stiff competition for farmers trying to grow a wheat crop and make a living from it."

It has turned many good people bad. Foreign aid is too tempting and often counterproductive.

For example, wheat shipments to Bangladesh are stiff competition for farmers trying to grow a wheat crop and make a living from it. Foreign aid given directly to foreign governments makes it very difficult for democratic institutions to form and flourish.

These governments in many cases turn a deaf ear to their subjects because very little, if any, taxes are collected from their people.

Probably the best type of aid giving has come from small organizations, NGOs, which work more directly with people at the village level or with a specific target group in an urban setting.

Infrastructures not adequate

Even here, great care must be given to the type of aid promoted. You don't want to create an infrastructure which becomes an employment agency to the neglect of the people you are trying to serve. Many NGOs are also frustrated with the big schemes of their host countries which collect millions of dollars from abroad.

These schemes are anti-development and only serve the interest of the local political elite. The urban political agenda is to create an alliance with the rural political elite because they control the massive rural vote. So development funds are channelled in a way to achieve maximum political mileage. This is especially true in Bangladesh where there is a semblance of a democracy, hardly.

It is interesting to note that we as expatriates were able to purchase butter oil for cooking. However on the butter oil can it was written: "Free Gift from the European Economic Community"! I also know of many expatriates who picked up excellent jackets from donated clothing markets.

Methods need reform

It would be unfair if we placed all the blame on those who receive aid. The real problem is the millions of dollars passing from governments to governments and from United Nation organizations to governments.

In many instances, the infrastructure is not in place to absorb these development funds. Instead, a major portion of development aid goes to fund bloated governments and all their accessory staff and of course their military establishments.

I want to assure Canadians not to feel bad about falling behind other countries in aid giving. It's now up to the Canadian public to either push for responsible aid forms or to get out of the racket altogether.

Peter Ysselstein was a former CRWRC development worker from 1983-1986. He lives in Guelph, Ont., and is a member of the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church.

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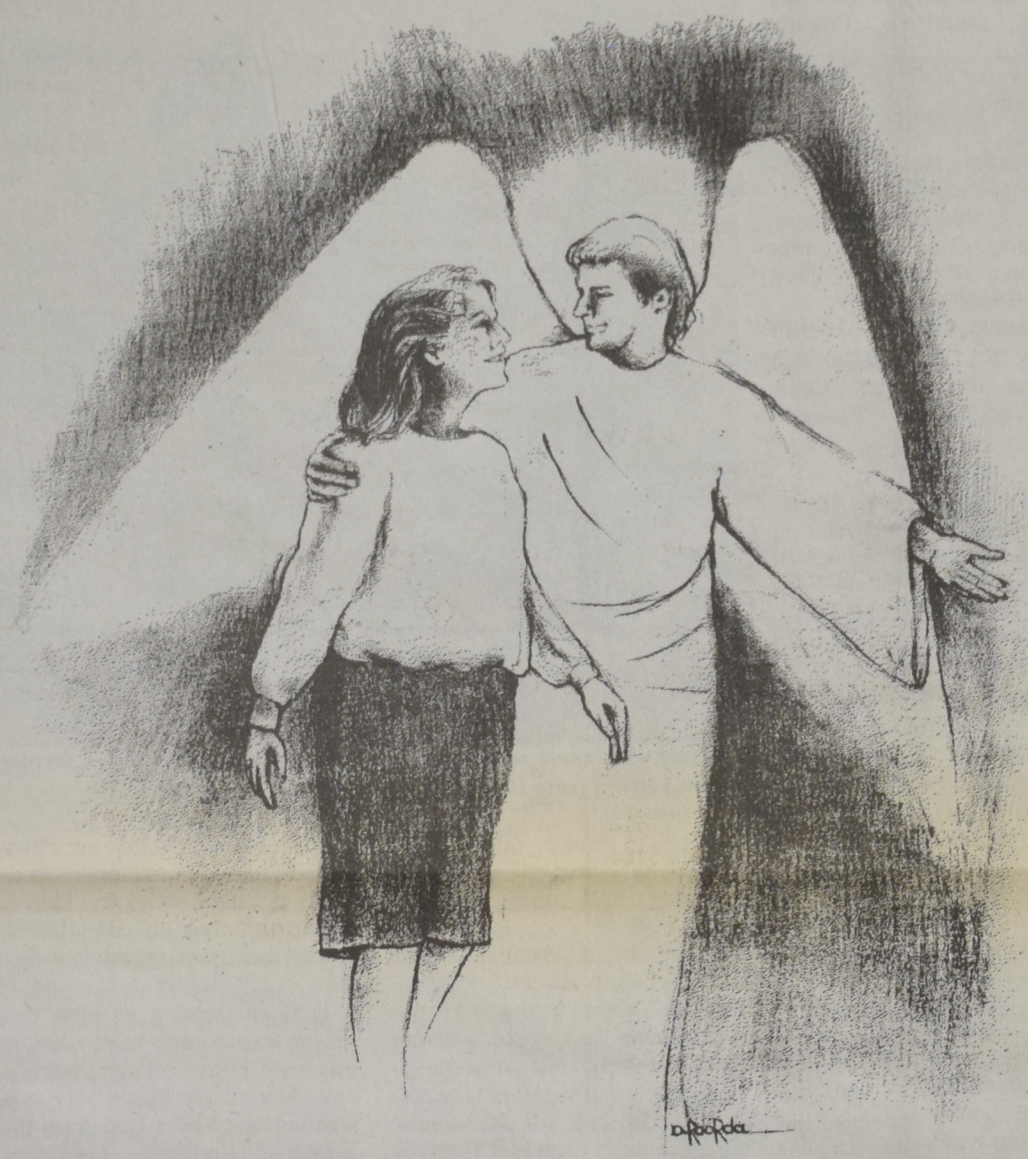
Feature

The angel's only message

Mary Hoefer

Betty Fergusen was sitting in church one Sunday morning when the roof opened up and an angel came down. Betty was not particularly surprised. She had always felt that you exposed yourself to powerful unknown forces when you put yourself in God's presence, and you might just as easily be struck dead as go home to your Sunday dinner. Not that Betty believed God was the sort of being who would capriciously knock people off, but she did believe that the power of the Almighty was too often taken for granted.

What did surprise her about the angel was that no one else appeared to have noticed it at all.



What did surprise her about the angel was that no one else appeared to have noticed it at all. Pastor Nelson continued to preach (something about wandering in the wilderness) and the people around her continued to sit and watch him. Not a single person gasped or fell to the floor as you might expect with angels. Merle, sitting next to Betty, was pushing at his cuticles.

Meanwhile, the angel (who was about seven feet tall and glowing) was getting silly. He danced up and down in the aisles. He stood beside the pastor and imitated his gestures. Finally, he crouched behind the pastor and pulpit so only his wings showed and slowly he flapped them so it looked as thought the pulpit might fly away.

It was at this point that Betty heard little Lizzie Milner giggle, and saw she was pointing at the angel.

"Shhh...," said Mrs. Milner.

Finally, the angel (who was giggling himself) walked down the aisle and grabbed Betty's hand.

"Okay, Mrs. Fergusen. Enough of that. Time for you to come on with me."

This did alarm Betty. Naturally, the first thing you think when an angel says, "Time for you to come with me" is that you're going to die, or you already have. Betty looked at Merle, who was now dozing a little. Surely she was not dead already, or Merle would have noticed.

The angel led her down the aisle and out the back door of the church. His wings brushed against the people on the aisles as they passed, but they simply scratched or twitches as he walked by. Betty, on the other hand, got a few absent smiles and nods from her friends as she passed.

"Mrs. Fergusen, God has sent me to tell you to feed the hungry."

Betty was confused. There was nothing so unusual about the message that it required an angel to deliver it. Dare she ask for more specifics?

The angel responded to her thoughts. "I'm sorry, that is the only message I have."

With that he clapped her on the shoulder and disappeared.

"Feed the hungry, feed the hungry," thought Betty as she went back to her seat.

"Feed the hungry," she thought as she prepared Sunday dinner for Merle and the kids and grandkids.

"Feed the hungry," she thought as she drifted off to sleep that night.

The next morning, Betty went to the grocery store and bought beef cubes and vegetables and made beef stew in the largest pan she had. She carried the pan downtown and started dishing it up. She did the same thing every day after that, gradually accumulating more and bigger pans, and making more varied meals. She began spending all of her days and a large portion of her money shopping, cooking and distributing food.

Merle, growing tired of Betty's relentless devotion to the feeding project, moved into a hotel for a week, hoping that she would come to her senses. When she didn't, he moved home again.

Her children, after a Sunday dinner that consisted of cold-cut sandwiches they made themselves, had a lengthy discussion with her about the importance of taking time for her family and for herself. She agreed with them that family and one's personal life were important matters that should not be neglected. Then she excused herself so she could get to the grocery store before it closed. Her children stopped coming for Sunday dinner.

One day, after about six months, Betty's son Dan came by with his children to borrow a stepladder. He found Merle in the kitchen chopping onions. Betty was browning the meat for beef vegetable soup. Without thinking much about it, Dan found himself cutting up carrots, and the children were dicing potatoes.

And so it was that eventually all of Betty's large extended family and half the community became involved in the feeding project.

The next time the angel came during church, Betty was not the only person who saw him. The congregation gasped collectively. Some people fell to their knees; others covered their faces. The minister stopped speaking and stepped aside, yielding the pulpit. The angel approached the microphone, beamed at them all, and said, "Nice job."

Mary Hoefer is a published author, and attorney, wife and mother of two daughters. She lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

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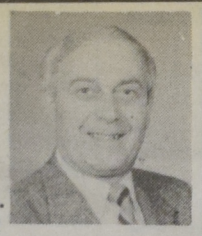

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

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Obituaries

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me. Bless me, bless his holy name!" (Ps.103).

In his infinite wisdom the Lord called to Himself His child

CHRISTINA COLYN (SCHERFF)

of Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont., in her 93rd year.

Dear wife of the late John Colyn (1996).

Dear mother of:
William & Margaret Colyn — Wellandport
Annie & Jacob Vander Meulen — Stirling
Allard & Imie Colyn — Smithville
Joanne (Knevel) & Jerry Hertner — Aylmer
John & Mary Colyn — Vineland
Gerda & Andy Vander Kloet — St. Catharines

Predeceased by six sisters and one brother, son-in-law Hendrick Knevel, and great-grandchild Nathan Wassenaar. Beloved sister of one brother, Johannes, in the Netherlands. Dear grandmother of 30 grandchildren and 54 great-grandchildren.

Christina and her husband John, and family, emigrated from Holland in 1949. The family is very appreciative of Canada's role in the liberation of Holland and the opportunity to make a new home in Canada. In 1954, Christina, John and family moved to the farm on Spring Creek Road near the Hamlet of Tintern, and the farm remains in the family to this day.

In 1973, Christina and John retired from farming, moving to Vineland and later to St. Catharines. In 1991, Christina and John moved to Shalom Manor in Grimsby, Ont., and the family is grateful for the dedication of the staff at Shalom Manor and the care provided.

Christina was a little girl when the Titanic sank. Back then "running water" was a yoke on her shoulders and a pail on each side. She lived through two world wars and the great depression in between. For courage she prayed, and how she prayed that her husband might be released from the concentration camp. She took that courage, and convinced the Nazis to let him go. Thanks be to God who makes all things well. Christina loved her children and grandchildren and set a good example encouraging them to reach out and help others.

Funeral service was held at Trinity Orthodox Ref. Church, St. Catharines, Ont., followed by interment at the Vineland Cemetery.

Donations to Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont., would be appreciated.

Look for our **Calendar of Events** on page 19...

Obituaries

Nieuw Vennep, the Neth. — Listowel, Ont.
1922 - 1997

On Dec. 25, 1997, after a painful battle with cancer, the Lord called His servant

MAARTEN DERUITER

home to glory.

He was the beloved husband of Sjieuwke (Susan) and father, grandfather and great-grandfather to:
Henry — Listowel, Ont.
Angela
Austin
Krista, Joseph, Joshua
Linda & Melvin Graham — Markdale, Ont.
Sherri
Ashley
Robert & Tuyen — Cary, N.C.
Kevin, Ryan
Martin & Eileen — Baden, Ont.
Peter & Cory (fiancee), Jeffrey, Tammy
Jenny & Bert Askes — Bluevale, Ont.
Marie, Kathryn, Elizabeth, Carolyn
Richard & Lynn — New Liskeard, Ont.
Leslie, Taylor
Susan — Listowel, Ont.
David — Listowel, Ont.
Tena & Theo Boven — Lindsay, Ont.
Benjamin, Helen, Alison

as well as foster parent to many other children throughout the years. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord... will award me on that day..." (2 Tim. 4:7,8).

Home address: 290 Havelock Ave., Listowel, ON N0G 2A6

Psalm 23:6

At Holland Chr. Homes, Faith Manor, Brampton, Ont., the Lord has called home for the celebration of His love and faithfulness our loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

SIEMKJE DE VRIES (nee DYKSTRA)

on Nov. 27, 1997, in her 93rd year.

Predeceased by her husband Pieter, Feb. 1980, one son Piet, one grandson in the Netherlands.

Lovingly remembered and sadly missed by her children:
Bantje & Oeds Wyma — Bomwird, Fr.
Doeke & Helen de Vries — Smithville, Ont.
Henk & Marg de Vries — Brooklin, Ont.
Jane & Leo Veenstra — Kitchener, Ont.
Alice & Eiko Korvemaker — Wyoming, Ont.
Marg & Dick Seinen — Jos, Nigeria
Alice & Art Verbeek — Dunnville, Ont.

32 grandchildren and 76 great-grandchildren.

Obituaries

Romans 8:37

Went to be with her Lord, peacefully, our much loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

HENDERIKA J. BOVEN (KASSIES)

on Sunday, Dec. 14, 1997.

She was born on Feb. 23, 1904, in Nieuwe Pekela, the Neth., and came to Canada with her family in 1958.

Dear mother of:
Betsie & Piet Boonstra — the Neth.
Gerrit & Nel Boven — Seaforth
Riet & Roger Hurdlik — Chicago
John & Femmie Boven — Clinton
Henk & Anneke Boven — the Neth.
Kinie & Bernie Kolkman — Goderich
Ineke & Chris Knetsch — Toronto
Helen (daughter-in-law) — Londesborough
Corrie & Kurt Stryker — Seaforth
Fred & Greta Boven — Kingston
Alie Boven — the Neth.
Carl & Shirley Boven — Kingston

grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Gone before her are her husband Karel, son Albert, and daughter-in-law Janke.

Correspondence address:
Gerrit Boven, Box 1214, Seaforth, ON N0K 1W0

Passed on to the Heavenly Mansions

BENJAMIN NYMEYER

of Cambridge, Ont., in his 80th year on Dec. 10, 1997.

The Lord saved his life graciously for work in His kingdom.

He was a member of the Zion United Ref. Church of Sheffield, Ont.

His family is grateful to the Lord for the blessings of a life in service to His glory.

Ben is survived by his wife of 55 years, Swany, a son John and his wife Janet, daughter Jane and husband Clarence Hoogendoorn, daughter Chris, daughter-in-law Grace and six grandchildren.

He was predeceased by a son Ben.

Funeral services were held at Zion United Ref. Church on Saturday, Dec. 13, 1997.

Final resting place is at Mount View Cemetery in Cambridge, Ont.

All praise and honor to the Lord!

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Obituaries

Ede, the Neth. — Navan, Ont.
March 31, 1901 - Dec. 23, 1997

REINTJE STAAL

Predeceased by her husband Roelof Staal, who died on Feb. 23, 1991.

Dear mother of:
Bruce Staal — Navan, Ont.
Cornelia & Henry Van Den Broek — Winchester, Ont.
Jane & Ranger De Vries — Osgoode, Ont.
Basil & Grace Staal — Navan, Ont.

Dear stepmother of:
Henk & Bev Staal — Russell, Ont.
Herman & Gerda Staal — the Neth.
(Herman died in June 1966)

Dear grandmother and great-grandmother of 25 grandchildren and 38 great-grandchildren.

Funeral was held on Dec. 27, 1997.

Correspondence address:
c/o Bruce Staal, 3602 Milton Rd., Navan, ON K4B 1H8

Aleksandrów, Poland — Dundas Ont.
Jan. 13, 1993 - Dec. 17, 1997

ADREA AGNIESZKA WESSELIUS

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Her quiet determination was an inspiration to all who knew her. She enjoyed listening to music, and stories read to her.

She became lonely after her younger sister Natasha passed away last month of the same disease.

Much loved and will be sorrowfully missed by her parents, Henry and Izabela Wesselius, Dundas, Ont., grandparents, Wiepke and Alida Wesselius, Bowmanville, Ont., grandmother Jolanta Pietrykowska, great-grandmother, Halina Kazancew Ciechocinek, Poland, uncles, aunts, cousins and caregivers.

"He gathers the lambs in His arms, and carries them close to His heart" (Isaiah 40:11b).

Correspondence address:
H. Wesselius, 112-18 Dundas St., Dundas, ON L9H 6Z7

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Mobile home in Florida, Gulf Coast. Available from Jan. 1, 1998. 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, central AC. **Call (905) 459-3913 or fax (905) 459-6135.**

Classifieds

Obituaries

Leeuwarden Willowdale
Fr., the Neth. Ont.
April 24, 1925 - Dec. 10, 1997

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps.27:1).

PIETER VAN DER VEEN

was suddenly taken home by his Lord on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 1997. Piet will be fondly remembered by his loving wife Hilda and by his children and grandchildren:
Rita — Shelburne, Ont.
Theo & Ellen — Peterborough, Ont.
Joel, Peter & Carolyn
Ed & Anna — Elora, Ont.
Chris, Darren, Nicole & Josh
Jacky — Willowdale, Ont.
Correspondence address:
217 Moore Park Ave., Willowdale, ON M2M 1N5

Witmarsum Hamilton
Fr. Ont.
Oct. 26, 1919 - Dec. 21, 1997

On the morning of the last Sunday of Advent, after a lifetime of unstinting devotion to his family, his community, and to the Lord

KLAAS TERPSTRA

passed away. He will be sorely missed by his wife Ann (nee Drexhage) and by his children and children-by-marriage:
Alberta & Casey Boks — Kingston, Ont.
Tina & John Richey — Vernon, B.C.
John & Mary Terpstra — Hamilton, Ont.
Nick & Angela Terpstra — Regina, Sask.
and by his grandchildren, Travis, Tom, Katie, Alyssa, Tyler, Anna, Nigel, Christopher and Alison, and by the many people who were affected directly and indirectly through his many years of service.
A man of action and a man of words, both written and spoken, two of the last sentences that came from his typewriter read: "It SCARES ME TO DEATH when I look at my sins and shortcomings, but I also know that I am saved by grace. So I am ready to go HOME."
The funeral was held at Immanuel Chr. Ref. Church on Dec. 24, 1997, Rev. J. Zantingh officiating.
Correspondence address:
31 Archdeacon Clark Trail, Hamilton, ON L9B 2M1

Miscellaneous

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NEEDED, summer help from approx. mid March to the end of August for a medium sized dairy farm in Dundas, Ont. Tractor and milking experience required.
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Teachers

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Please mail resumes to:
Mr. John Bronsema, Principal
Bulkley Valley Chr. School
Secondary Campus
P.O. Box 3635
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0 or fax to (250) 847-3564.

Teachers

AGASSIZ, B.C.: Agassiz Chr. School is seeking applications for the position of **Principal** for the 1998-99 school year. This is a well-established interdenominational school (84 students K-7) in a rural community of 5,000 nestled in the eastern Fraser Valley. The applicant must be a committed Christian and a strong promotor of Christian education. Please forward your resume no later than Jan. 9, 1998, to **Board Chairman Heine VanderVeen, Box 858, Agassiz, BC V0M 1A0. Phone (604) 796-2848; fax number the same.**

ORANGEVILLE, Ont.: Orangeville Chr. School invites applications to fill a definite part-time vacancy on its teaching staff due to a maternity leave starting March 1998. The successful applicant is required to teach in the Intermediate level/Resource program and will be a certified teacher with training and/or experience in Special Education. Please send a letter of application, a resume, and a Christian philosophy of education to:
Mr. George Hoytema
Orangeville Chr. School
P.O. Box 176
Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z6
(519) 941-3381

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Job Opportunities

Orillia Christian School
Orillia, Ontario

is seeking applications for the position of

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Orillia Chr. School is a well-established, interdenominational Christian School offering a Christ-centered education to 120 students from K-8. The applicant must be a committed Christian and be able to articulate a sound vision of Christian education. OCS seeks a principal with a preferred minimum of 3 years experience in Christian School leadership. The position includes teaching responsibilities.

Please send your resume along with a statement of your vision of Christian education and supporting documents, no later than Jan. 31, 1998, to the attention of **Orillia Chr. School, Principal Search Committee, c/o Mr. John Schenk, chairman, 111 Simcoe Street, Orillia, ON L3X 1G6 or fax to: (705) 326-5943.**

Calvin College
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The Calvin College Education Department seeks candidates for a tenure-track position (subject to approval) which primarily involves teaching and advising in the M. Ed. Curriculum and Instruction Program with some duties in the undergraduate teacher education program.

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Calvin College is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity and is an equal opportunity employer. The College encourages the application of women and minority candidates. Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and curriculum vitae to:
Dr. L. Stegink, Department Chair, Education Department, Calvin College, 3201 Burton, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546, by March 1, 1998, or until the position is filled.

Ottawa Christian School
is seeking applications for the position of

PRINCIPAL

Our school is a non-denominational community of 180 students and 11 teachers, offering an educational program from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. The position of Principal includes both teaching and administrative responsibilities. Ottawa Christian School is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.

Interested candidates are invited to submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae **before Feb. 15, 1998,** to:

Principal Search Committee
c/o Mr. L. Vandergrift
937 Alpine Ave., Ottawa, ON K2B 5R9
For further information, please call: (613)820-0272

Classifieds

Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

NEEDED: COUNSELLOR/THERAPIST

Christian Counselling Ministries of Truro, Nova Scotia, seeks **two professional therapists** to staff their community-based, non-profit, board-run program. Candidates will have a minimum of a Master's Degree, be licensed, and have related experience. They should also have strong clinical, management and public speaking skills. Applicants need to be committed to living in obedience to Christ and be able to convey both biblical and psychological truths.

Send letters/resumes to **Personnel Committee, 883 Prince Street, Truro, NS B2N 1H2. Closing date: March 1, 1998.**

Send your questions to Peter and Marja Confidentiality is assured.

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Please send resumes and a brief statement of your philosophy of Christian Education **before Jan. 30, 1998**, to:

Al Schut, President
Edmonton Society for Christian Education
13470 Fort Road, Edmonton, AB T5A 1C5
Phone: (403) 476-6281

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An Anniversary coming up?
Please note...

If you would like to place an anniversary announcement please note the dates that *Christian Courier* does not publish a paper **(see page 5, publication box)**. Please keep in mind the date of the anniversary and the open house, if there is one. **Ten days before the issue date** all copy should be in. This will avoid the disappointment of people being informed too late about an anniversary date or open house of dear friends.

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Miscellaneous | **Miscellaneous** | **Miscellaneous**

Holland Christian Homes Information Meeting, Brampton, Ont.

On **Saturday, Jan. 10, 1998, at 10 a.m.**, you are invited to attend an information meeting in Heritage Hall where preliminary plans and drawings will be shared regarding the development of the new property H.C.H. has recently purchased.
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Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Jan. 25 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Ralph Koops, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Feb. 4 Annual "Church & The Law" seminar, for ministers, church leaders and Christian charities, providing practical information on current legal issues. From 8 a.m.-3:45 p.m., Queensway Cathedral, 1536 The Queensway, **Toronto** (Etobicoke), Ont. Held in conjunction with the Canadian Council of Christian Charities. Main speakers: Carl Juneau (Revenue Canada) and Father Francis G. Morrisey (Ottawa's St. Paul's University). Info.: Phone (519) 669-5137, Fax (519) 669-3291.

Feb. 25-28 The 1998 Stone Lectures, featuring Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff and presentations by five panels of scholars. Topic: "Religion, Pluralism, and the Public Life - Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the 21st Century." Sponsored by the Princeton Theological Seminary, the Centre for Public Justice, the Free University in Amsterdam and Calvin College. Info.: Phone (410) 571-6300, Fax (410) 571-6365, e-mail: inquiries@cpjustice.org

News

'We could never have built it without them,' says flood survivor

BRUCE HILDEBRAND

On the sign held by Margaret Roberts are the names of the following CRWRC volunteers: Bud Hubers, Dick Lyzenga, Harlan Meiste, Dick Jongsma, Len Verbeek, John Wikkerink, Mel Melissen, Marion Vos, Jack Buis, Carl Sneller, Norman Prins and John Rozeveld.

Carol Thiessen

ST. AGATHE, Man. — After six months in a cramped trailer, the Robertses are ready for the comforts of their new home perched safely on a human-made hill near the Red River.

During last spring's flood, their St. Agathe home was swamped by a wave of water that broke through the village's flood defenses and rushed through its streets.

Over the past few months, Ray and Margaret Roberts have watched a new home slowly take shape on a hill of packed clay, high above last year's flood levels.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) has been knee-deep in the building project. MDS volunteers have supplied labor while the Robertses — through payments from the Red Cross and the provincial government's Emergency Management Organization — have paid for materials. "We could never have built it without them (MDS)," Margaret said.

Across the Red River Valley, MDS continues to help flood victims rebuild their lives. MDS volunteers sandbagged homes prior to the flood, then helped clean-up after its destruction, and have now been rebuilding and renovating since mid-July.

Gord Friesen, MDS project manager for the rebuilding phase, says MDS volunteers, in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and Manitoba Mercy Mission (100 Huntley Street) are doing renovation work on approximately 80 homes, and are open to more projects.

Syd Reimer, MDS's flood project co-ordinator, says they still need volunteers. "We'll be working through the winter as we get volunteers," he says.

At Tina Loewen's Rosenort-area home, MDS volunteers continue to work — finishing off a new entrance and refurbishing the main floor. They're drywalling, putting in flooring, painting, doing electrical work and so on.

"When you can see the difference from one day to the next, it's just encouraging," daughter Lori Scharfenberg says.

Loewen's small bungalow now sits on a nine-foot-high earth pad, safe from the floodwaters of the Morris River, which is a tributary of the Red. It has come a long way from those harrowing days in late April when the sandbag dike failed and the family watched the home succumb to flood waters.

Scharfenberg estimates 35 MDS volunteers have helped rebuild her mother's home, and that's not counting those who helped sandbag before the flood and clean up after.

Singing painters

The Roberts estimate they've played host to at least 30 volunteers. "I really think they've been doing marvellous work," Margaret said.

She recalls four older women from Winkler who sang as they perched precariously on ladders to paint her ceiling.

Reimer says he estimates volunteers under MDS's umbrella have given more than 13,000 days to flood relief. As well, donations amounting to $1 million have poured in to aid MDS's work. Approximately half has gone into a building fund (including $250,000 from the Red Cross) and half to cover operational expenses.

Reimer says MDS has never responded in such a large way to a disaster in Canada before. "This is the biggest in Canada," he says. Still, for some recipients of that help, it was difficult to ask. "I don't like to ask somebody to do something for me for free," explains Ray.

"I love to give, but it's very hard to receive," adds Margaret.

But she felt they had no choice. At the height of the flood, the main floor of their long-time family home was covered with 5 1/2 feet of water, leaving it uninhabitable. While still filled with memories, it now sits empty, waiting to be torn down. Instead, the Roberts moved into the tiny RV parked on the yard, and stored in a container the belongings which they managed to save. With MDS's help, their new home is almost complete.

BRUCE HILDEBRAND

This human-made hill supports the new Roberts' home. The hole left from building the hill will become a pond which will attract deer.

No longer on the move

For them, moving into the cozy 1,120 sq.ft. bungalow can't come too soon, even if it means sleeping on the floor, using an outdoor toilet or just eating snacks for the next while.

"I don't care if I have to eat sandwiches for the next two weeks, as long as I'm in my house," says Ray.

"We've gone through so much it doesn't matter," agrees Margaret.

Loewen feels the same way. She gets tried just thinking of the last few months. Ever since the flood filled the home with silt and mud, she's been on the move from place to place.

Five moves later, and a hip surgery thrown in to boot, the widow is beginning to hope she'll finally be home for Christmas.

She says she was thrilled when MDS asked her last summer if she needed help. "You know, when you're at that point when you don't know if you're coming or going and then someone comes in and says they want to help, it's unbelievable," she says. "I haven't begged for it, but I've sure appreciated it."

For MDS, it's people like Loewen and the Robertses who make the long hours of labor worthwhile. "Seeing their expressions and their feelings change from anger and frustration and hopelessness to sheer happiness and gratitude: I've never experienced that before," says Friesen.

A wonderful Red River coincidence

Bert Witvoet

ST. AGATHE — My wife, Alice, and I travelled through southern Manitoba last summer and decided to turn south at Winnipeg to visit the town of St. Agathe. We had heard about this town when the Red River flooded it and other communities. A town councillor in St. Agathe pointed us to the local restaurant where we could receive information about the flood.

The owners, Margaret and Ray Roberts, told us all about the flooding and how authorities had deliberately flooded St. Agathe to save the city of Winnipeg. They could understand that it was better to flood a rural area like St. Agathe's rather than a densely populated area like Winnipeg.

But what they did not appreciate was that the authorities had not warned them. The men who had stayed behind to watch the dikes had to quickly get out of the way of the approaching waves of water rolling over the land.

After having enjoyed a cup of coffee and cinnamon pastry at the restaurant, we followed Ray across the bridge to the other side of the river where the Roberts' flood-damaged house and trailer were standing. Ray showed us the big mound of dirt that a bulldozer was finishing off. A new house would be built on this flood hill Ray told us. Alice took a picture of the two of us "on top of the world.".

Imagine Alice's and my surprise in late December when CC received a news story from the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) telling us about the new home built for Ray and Margaret Roberts. It was good to hear that Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) volunteers had worked on their house as part of the MDS flood relief efforts.

We were grateful to MDS and CRWRC for this magnificent relief work and so pleased that the Lord had led us to this very couple and site that we now read about.

ALICE WITVOET

August 1, 1997: Ray Roberts proudly shows Bert Witvoet "the pad" on which their next house will be built (see above).